Research Proposal of the Thesis Entitled

Impact of Employee Engagement Tools and Techniques on Employer Branding and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

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1. Introduction

We are living in the age of globalisation. Earlier the organisations had to face competition only from the regional and local players. With globalisation, the challenges have highly increased because of the global players joining the competition. The organisations are continuously trying to gain competitive advantage over their competitors through various methods. High degree of employee engagement helps to enhance workers' productivity and also the quality of their work. This gives competitive advantage to the organisations. This is the reason employee engagement has become very important for the organisations.

Employee Engagement is explained as employees' commitment, dedication, and enthusiasm towards their work. A participant in a focus group interview conducted by O. C. Tanner Institute mentioned employee engagement as the attachment or the interconnection the employees perceive towards their work (*Synthesis Global Culture Report by O.C. Tanner Institute,* 2021). M & Dsouza, (2023) have explained employee engagement as the attitude the employees have towards their work. The employees who care more for delivering a decent job have a higher engagement level. As per Maslach and Leiter (2008) employee engagement is said to be the antonym of burnout. Thus, employees with higher engagement level, even with a higher work-pressure will have less or no burnout as they enjoy doing their work.

The companies are concerned about the extent of job-related engagement the employees have as it has huge consequence on their performance. Higher degree of engagement results into

higher job satisfaction, leading to improved performance. The employees having high level of engagement towards their jobs have less chances of leaving the organisation. Rathy & Samy (2024) have mentioned that high degree of engagement helps to retain employees. This leads to low turnover rate or lower attrition of the employees, which is beneficial for the organisations. The employees staying longer in an organisation knows the culture of the organisation better and have clear understanding of its mission, vision, and objectives. They can help the organisation to attain its goals faster and in a more effective way.

For the last couple of years, employee engagement has become very popular and key area for the employers. Different companies are using different strategies like better pay, regular and real-time feedback, rewards and recognition for good performance; having both way communication, to identify and analyse the problems of the employees. They also use these to understand what the employees want, taking care of employee wellbeing, etc. M & Dsouza (2023) have mentioned using organisational fairness and having motivating jobs to improve engagement of the employees. Apart from these strategies the employers also need to consider other less explored techniques for improving the level of employee engagement. Some of these techniques are work-life balance, psychological safety and gamification.

The above techniques help to improve employee engagement resulting into organisational citizenship behaviour among the employees. Employees with high level of organisational citizenship behaviour can work freely without any fear of being judged or criticised, leading to higher productivity, creativity and innovation. Effectively engaged employees also help to create a better branding of the employer in the job market. Organisations with better branding have two major advantages – it helps the organisations to retain its existing efficient workers, and also helps to attract the best talents – the most competent workers from the market.

2. Literature Review

As per Kompaso & Sridevi (2010) it is difficult to give one single and universally accepted definition till date for the term employee engagement which is clearly evident from the definitions given for the term by the three renowned research organizations of human resource management. As per the authors not only individuals but even well renounced human resource organisations have failed to give a universally accepted definition, and to prove their point they have given the examples of three organisations.

- Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) has defined employee engagement as "employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis."
- Employee engagement definition given by Gallup, Inc. America is that "employee engagement is the involvement with and enthusiasm for work."
- Robinson et al. (2004) have defined employee engagement as "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value."

Employee engagement is a concept that includes a two-way relationship between the employer and the employee (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010), where both play equally important role. As per Robertson-smith & Markwick (n.d.), the level of employee engagement may vary based on:

- different biographical and personality characteristics
- length of service, occupation, and seniority in an organisation

As per the authors, there are certain overlapping areas amongst employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee commitment. But all these terms are different from each other and have different and specific meanings. Thus, technically they cannot be used as the exact synonyms of each other.

Yadav et al. (2020) have explained employee engagement as a cheerful and positive work-oriented attitude of the employees for their organisation, their work and the work culture of their organisation. Iddagoda & Opatha (2016) cited Schaufeli et al. (2006), mentioning employee engagement as a positive, satisfying work-related condition of employees' minds. They also cited Dharmasiri (2010) who wrote that employee engagement includes employee's head, heart and hand involvement in the work. Chanana & Sangeeta (2021) have explained employee engagement as a workplace attitude that ensures that all the employees give their best performance every day and be committed to the organisation's values and goals. The authors have also mentioned that the major difficulty in explaining the concept of employee engagement is the shortage of its general definition in theoretical literature. The authors have also mentioned that the employees express and engage themselves physically (physical force devoted for doing the work), emotionally (positive and negative attitude of the employees) and cognitively (beliefs about leaders, employees and working environment) in their work performance. Chanana & Sangeeta (2021) cited R. May et al. (2004) suggesting that employee engagement is closest to employee emotions, employee well-being and job involvement. They have also cited Saks (2006) where the latter has divided employee engagement into two parts viz. ***job engagement*** meaning the engagement the employees have towards the job, and ***organisational engagement*** *meaning* the engagement the employees have towards the organisation.

In an article, three approaches for employee engagement had been mentioned by Bakker & Schaufeli (2008).

- As per the first approach it is a set of resources which helps to motivate like performance feedback, the acknowledgement, appreciation and help from peers; the opportunities for learning and development.
- The second approach mentions it to be high level of employee commitment and extra role behaviour. Because of high degree of engagement, employees perform better than the required standard because the employees want the company to succeed.
- As per the third approach, it is a job-related employees' well-being state of mind leading to less or no burnout.

Nuamcharoen (2021) stated employee engagement as "positive and motivational state of mind of an employee towards an organisation and its value.". He has discussed the four employee engagement models in his article:

- **Aon Hewitt Engagement model** which identifies and explains the six factors of employee engagement viz. company practices, people, work, opportunities, rewards and quality of work life which are interrelated. This model also mentions about the consequences of the employee engagement namely Say, Stay and Strive i.e., the '3S's.
- **Saks' model of employee engagement antecedents and consequences** which explores the relationship between the driving forces or the antecedents and the results or the consequences of employee engagement. The six drives are "job characteristics, perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, reward and recognition, procedural justice and distributive justice" (Nuamcharoen, 2021) . This model also mentions about the consequences at the two levels:
    - at ***individual level*** which includes organisational commitment, job satisfaction and the intent to leave, and

- at ***organisational level*** which includes organisational citizenship behaviour.

- **Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model** developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), where the authors included new groups of ***working conditions***, viz. social support, performance feedback, autonomy, etc; and ***personal resources***, viz. self-esteem, optimism, etc. to the existing two working conditions – job resources and job demands.
- **Penna's model of hierarchy of engagement** which has been discussed in details later.

Another Employee Engagement model has been given by Shankar & Bhatnagar (2010) as cited by Iddagoda & Opatha (2016), which focuses on work-life balance and its relationship with employee engagement, employee turnover and emotional consonance/dissonance or emotional balance.

2.1 Effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance

Employee engagement is very important for any organisation as it increases the morale of the employees (Kahn, 1990). The employees who are highly engaged are more motivated and they contribute their knowledge, skill and abilities and helps the organisation in achieving success (Kahn, 1990). Swarnalatha & Sureshkrishna (2013), as cited in Kahn, (1990), have mentioned that with higher morale, motivation and productivity, high employee engagement also leads to a higher sense of well-being among the employees. Sreekanth & Aryasri, (2012) have mentioned that an engaged workplace leads to higher productivity, commitment and energy from all engaged employees which in turn leads to better performance of the organisation.

Iddagoda & Opatha (2016) cited Alfes et al. (2013) stating employee engagement leads to positive behavioural outcomes based on their relationship with their immediate boss and the climate of the organisation. A meta-analysis was conducted by Harter et al. (2002), which

showed that the engagement levels of the employees were positively related to the performance of the business units which included productivity, profitability, turnover, safety and customer satisfaction level.

2.2 Factors affecting Employee Engagement

As cited by Yuzarni (2019), an article by the Conference Board (2006) named 'Employee Engagement – A review of current research and its implication' identified key drivers related to employee engagement. Those key drivers are:

i. Career growth opportunities
ii. Pride about the company
iii. Nature of Job
iv. Trust and Integrity
v. Relationship between co-workers / team members
vi. Line of sight between employee and company performance

As cited by Yuzarni (2019), Penna (2007) had introduced a model similar to Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory related to the engagement of the employees known as "the Hierarchy of Engagement" where he had mentioned that the employees look for meaning in their jobs. Meaning as per the author is the fulfilment of the job. Meaning comes from a sense of belongingness, being appreciated and valued and a sense of being able to contribute for the organisation. As per this model, the employees are motivated by pay, working hours and working conditions at the lowest level. Once those are fulfilled, they look for learning and development. At the next level they are motivated by promotion opportunities. The leadership,

trust and respect become important to the employees after the promotion opportunities are obtained.

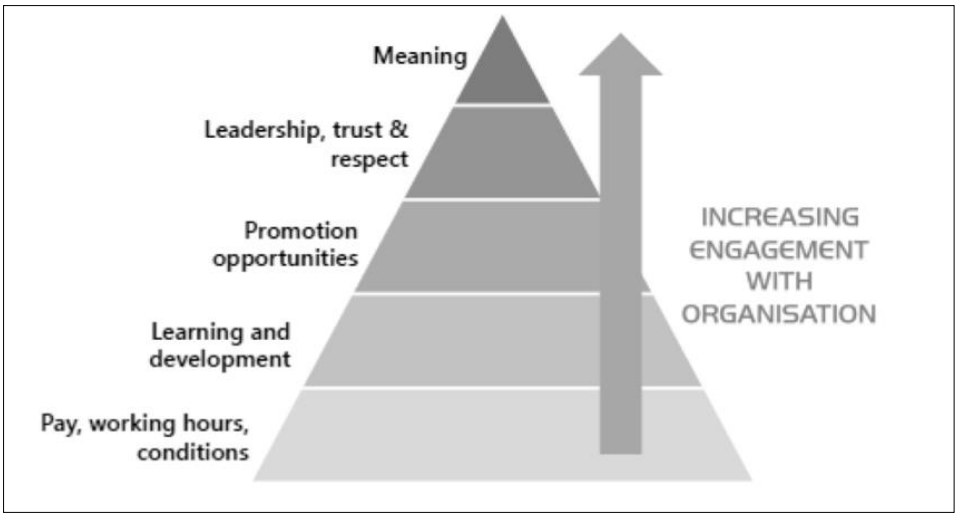

Image 1: Penna's (2007) Hierarchical Model
Source: (Bhatla, 2011)**, (Yuzarni, 2019)**

According to this theory, at the top most level of this hierarchy, the employees look for meaning in their jobs. As the employees move from the lower level to the higher level of this hierarchy, their engagement level increases.

Chanana & Sangeeta (2021) cited Vance (2006) stating that the organisations can improve employee engagement through some HR practices like better job design, proper recruitment and selection, adequate compensation, and proper training and performance management. The authors have also mentioned about six Cs for better employee engagement namely ***clarity, convey, confidence, connect, credibility and career***.

As per "*Synthesis 2021 Global Culture Report O.C. Tanner Institute"* (2021) there are six some core elements which have been termed as Talent Magnets which help to not only attract potential employees but also help to engage them. These factors are:

i. Employee Sense of Opportunity
ii. Employee Sense of Purpose
iii. Employee Sense of Wellbeing
iv. Employee Sense of Success
v. Employee Sense of Appreciation, and
vi. Employee Sense of Leadership

As per Sun & Bunchapattanasakda (2019), the factors influencing employee engagement can be categorised into three types:

i. Organisational factors like job rewards and management styles
ii. Job factors like working environment and task features
iii. Individual factors like physical energies and self-consciousness

Kumar (2021) has mentioned about five V's or ***V5 model*** for employee engagement that they identified from Harter et al. (2002) and Kahn (1990). These five Vs include:

i. ***Value*** i.e., valuing the efforts of the employees by the organisation;
ii. ***Voice*** i.e., scope the employees to express their worries without having to fear about the negative consequences;
iii. ***Variety*** i.e., designing the jobs in such a way so that it includes lots of skills and knowledge to increase innovation and creativity;
iv. ***Virtue*** i.e., a moralistic mission to support ethical values for all its stakeholders; and
v. ***Vision*** i.e., a clear and comprehensive goal which the business should strive to achieve in future.

Robison (2009) has suggested the ways to engage employees in a time of change like maintaining transparency with the employees, letting them know what is expected from them, providing them with the required tools and equipment, letting them do the jobs which they are best at doing, recognising their efforts, letting them know that the organisation cares for them and also encourage them for their development. The authors have also mentioned that high engagement results in better health and well-being of the employees, and lesser absenteeism and lesser job stress. Sievert & Scholz (2017) wrote that the trust of management on the employees, leaders acting as role models and a comparatively flat organisational structure increases employee engagement. Chanana & Sangeeta (2021) have mentioned that the other factors which affect employee engagement are internal corporate communication, perceived communication, satisfaction of the employees, continuous learning and sharing of knowledge, etc. have a positive effect on employee engagement as per Tiwari and Lenka (2019). They have also mentioned about strategies given by Jones and Kober (2019) to keep the employees engaged like staying centered to their core values, explicitly supporting their employees, solicit employee feedback, communicating upfront with the employees and committing to the employee's employment.

The authors also discussed about the five tips given by Fan et al. (2020) working from home viz. creating a healthy workspace, maintaining a routine, being social with the employees, encouraging well-being practices and investing in technology. Sarkar (2020) has given a given a new way of engaging employees who are working from home which is family engagement, to keep the kids of the employees engaged for a few hours while the employees' work. Some organisations have already started this practise like Delloite, Genpact Hindija Global Solutions and Accenture. Other employee engagement methods during the lockdown have been suggested by Goyal et al. (2020) like team meet-ups, weekly alignment sessions, team

gathering over video calls during lunch, some informal talk among team members, apology and appreciation talks, sharing online books and contents, emphasizing results over timeline, etc. Companies like Car24 engaged employees through family engagement like picture with pet, selfie with family, know your leader quiz, online karaoke challenge, online meditation and mental fitness classes, etc. (Bhardwaj, 2020).

2.3 Ways to measure Employee Engagement

The methods or ways to measure employee engagement include:

- Gallops's Q12 Survey (2016)
- The theoretical model given by (Imandin et al., 2016)

Gallop's Q12 survey (2016) involves 12 key expectations which when satisfied leads to the foundation of the strong feeling of engagement (Thackray, n.d.). As per Lager & Milojkovic (2018) this survey measures the employee engagement level at work categorising employees into three types – ***engaged, not engaged***, and ***actively disengaged***. It was designed after doing research with more than 25 million respondents across 189 countries. Žnidaršic & Bernik (2021) stated that Gallup survey conducted in 155 countries found that majority of the workers, i.e., 67% were not engaged.

The theoretical model given by Imandin et al. (2016) has identified 11 employee engagement constructs from the literature review (Johannessen & Skaalsvik, 2014), which includes:

i. ***Cognitive Drivers*** – employees' appraisal about whether their work is physically, emotionally and psychologically meaningful and whether they have sufficient resource to finish their work

ii. ***Emotional Engagement*** – As per Shuck & Reio (2014) it includes the investment of the emotional resources like pride, trust and knowledge, which employees have within their influence.

iii. ***Behavioural Engagement*** – Physical representation of cognitive and emotional engagement.

iv. ***Feeling Valued and Involved*** – This involves high involvement work practices like power to make decisions, and also reward and recognition for the work make employees feel valued and involved.

v. ***Engaged Leadership Team*** – Effective leaders lead to highly engaged employees

vi. ***Trust and Integrity*** – Trust and integrity among different hierarchical levels decides the degree of work engagement.

vii. ***Nature of the Job*** – This includes employees' involvement and the liberty to do their job freely. It involves high level of employee accountability which affect the employee engagement level.

viii. ***Connection between Individual and Company Performance*** – It is explained by extensiveness of the understanding the employees have towards the company's objectives.

ix. ***Career Growth Opportunities*** – This is the extent of career growth and promotion opportunities of the employees or the clearly defined career path (Hughes & Rog, 2008)

x. ***Stress-free Environment*** – This will lead to more innovative and creative workers leading to more successful employees giving optimum performance.

xi. ***Change Management*** – Involving employees in this process leads to high degree of employee engagement.

2.4 Employee Engagement Tools and Techniques

Tools and techniques of employee engagement are very important because by using them appropriately, the organisations can improve employees' job and organisational engagement. Some less explored areas have been explored to use them as effective tools for effectively engaging employers. These tools or techniques are as stated below:

2.4.1 Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement

Psychological safety is all about employees being comfortable to show their true selves, showing how they are and expressing what they actually think or feel without the fear of being judged or being punished or humiliated. As per Wahyu Ariani (2013) Kahn (1990) stated that workers are found to be more engaged where there is high level of psychological safety. As per Sun & Bunchapattanasakda (2019), psychological safety is mainly affected by social environment including interpersonal and intergroup relationships, management styles and organisational culture and norms.

2.4.2 Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement

Work-Life Balance is about whether employees can balance their private lives and their work lives. Employees are believed to have good work-life balance when they comfortably fulfill their professional and personal life responsibilities without any or minimum role conflicts. It

is required to maintain employees' productivity and avoid burnout in them in the long run. If they are allowed opportunity to keep the equilibrium in their professional and personal life, they will have a better mental health and they will be more engaged and productive in the long run. A study of the effect of work-life balance of the employees on employee engagement has been done by Parkes & Langford (2008).

2.4.3 Gamification and Employee Engagement

Gamification is comparatively a new term which includes making the work process more fun and rewarding which helps to increase the level of employee engagement. Girdauskiene et al. (2022) mentioned that Generation Y i.e. the people in the age group of 25 to 40 years who comprises of the major workforce, are less attached to the workplace and are more interested in their personal growth, development and progress. The authors here have mentioned gamification as a method of using gaming elements like pints, levels, challenges, competition, recognition, etc. in the non-gaming context that is for the organizational performance, which according to them is both motivating and engaging for the employees.

2.5 Areas affected by Employee Engagement

2.5.1 Employee Engagement and Employer Branding

Employer branding is related with the employees' ideas and opinion about their organization. As Tiwari & Lenka (2020) mentioned that employer branding helps to provide and maintain a supportive environment for the employees and help them meet their career aspirations. As per the authors the organizations through employer branding tries to create a positive image to its

existing employees which in turn not only helps to retain the existing talents but also helps to attract the talent from the market. Engaged employees are expected to enhance brand image of the organisation as an employer in the market as they feel proud about being a part of the organisation. The organisation's brand image improves through word-of-mouth process as the employees are expected to give positive review and feedback about the employer.

2.5.2 Employee Engagement and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour are the behaviour of the employees which improves the overall functioning of the organization but not required as per their job description. This is about employees doing things which are not their official responsibilities but still help the organisation run smoothly and productively. Wahyu Ariani (2013) stated that these behaviours are discretionary and are not directly related with the rewards paid to the employees. The authors have also mentioned that Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) helps to maintain the social support system indirectly often though not always support the task performance. The author has cited Konovsky and Organ (1996) identifying five dimensions of OCB viz. "altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue, and generalized compliance". He has also cited Williams & Anderson (1991) who classified Organisational Citizenship Behaviour into two broad types: OCBI affecting specific, and OCBO affecting the organisation. It can be said that employee engagement is directly proportionate to OCB.

3. Problem Definition/Research Gap

As per Sun & Bunchapattanasakda (2019) "there are three shortcomings in previous studies: lack of research on demographic variables, personality differences and cross-cultural

differences in employee engagement, lack of research on the mediating or moderating role of employee engagement, and lack of intervention mechanism for employee engagement". Also, though various works have been carried out on tools and techniques of employee engagement, not many have been done about their effect on employer branding and organisational citizenship behaviour together. Another less explored area is the impact of employee engagement tools and techniques on employer branding. A study of employee engagement on employer branding has been done by Tiwari & Lenka (2020), but this study mainly focuses on the survivors layoff process of IT/ITES organisations.

The research gap has also been identified through a systematic search on Dimensions website. The search was done on 16.07.2022.

Table 1: Dimensions Study Search Result done on 16.07.2022:

Search Word	Filter	Full Data	Title and Abstract
"Employee Engagement"	No filter	49726	4,854
	Filters		
	Year 010-2022	47,646	4,651
	Research Category- "Field Research 15 Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services, 1503 Business and Management"	19,361	2,828
	Publication Type – Articles, Chapters	16,537	2,575
"Employee Engagement" AND ("Tools" or "Techniques")	No filter	38,715	703
	Filters		
	Year 010-2022	37,135	682
	Research Category- "Field Research 15 Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services, 1503 Business and Management"	14,723	494
	Publication Type – Articles, Chapters	12,812	438
"Employee Engagement" AND ("Tools" or "Techniques") AND "Employer Branding"	Filters		
	Year 010-2022		
	Research Category- "Field Research 15 Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services, 1503 Business and Management"		
	Publication Type – Articles, Chapters	1,271	0
	No filter		

"Employee Engagement" AND ("Tools" or "Techniques") AND ("Employer Branding" OR "Organisational Citizenship Behaviour")	Filters		
	Year 010-2022		
	Research Category- "Field Research 15 Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services, 1503 Business and Management"		
	Publication Type – Articles, Chapters	3,847	0

4. Need and Significance of Study

In the current times there is a huge competition among the employers to get the best talents for their organisations and also to retain them as they give them a competitive edge. Higher degree of employee engagement increases the probability of attracting the best talents from the job market and retain them. The aim of this research is exploring effective tools and techniques for engaging employees through ensuring positive work-life balance, providing psychologically safe environment for the employees, and gamification of work and find out their effect on employer branding and on organisational citizenship behaviour.

5. Research Objectives

The objective is studying the impact of employee engagement tools and techniques viz. psychological safety, work life balance and gamification on employer branding and on organisational citizenship behaviour

The objectives can be encapsulated as:

- To explore the effectiveness of the various tools and techniques viz. psychological safety, work-life balance, and gamification used by organisations for engaging their employees.

- To ascertain the effect of different employee engagement tools and techniques on employer branding.
- To ascertain the effect of different employee engagement tools and techniques on organisational citizenship behaviour.

6. Research Questions

The following research questions can be formed based on the research objectives:

1. To what extend does Psychological Safety affect the level of employee engagement in an organisation?
2. To what extend does Work Life Balance affect the level of employee engagement in an organisation?
3. To what extend does Gamification affect the level of employee engagement in an organisation?
4. What is the impact of Employee Engagement on Employer Branding?
5. What is the impact of Employee Engagement on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour?

7. Research Hypotheses

- H_{O1} – Psychological Safety is not positively associated with Employee Engagement.

  H_{A1} – Psychological Safety is positively associated with Employee Engagement.

- H_{O2} – Work-Life Balance is not positively associated with Employee Engagement.

  H_{A2} – Work-Life Balance is positively associated with Employee Engagement.

- H_{o3} – Gamification is not positively associated with Employee Engagement.

  H_{A3} – Gamification is positively associated with Employee Engagement.

- H_{O4} – Employee Engagement is not directly proportional to Employer Branding.

  H_{A4} – Employee Engagement is directly proportional to Employer Branding.

- H_{O5} – Employee Engagement is not directly proportional to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

  H_{A5} – Employee Engagement is directly proportional to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

8. Suggested Model/Framework

Based on the above objectives the following model has been suggested:

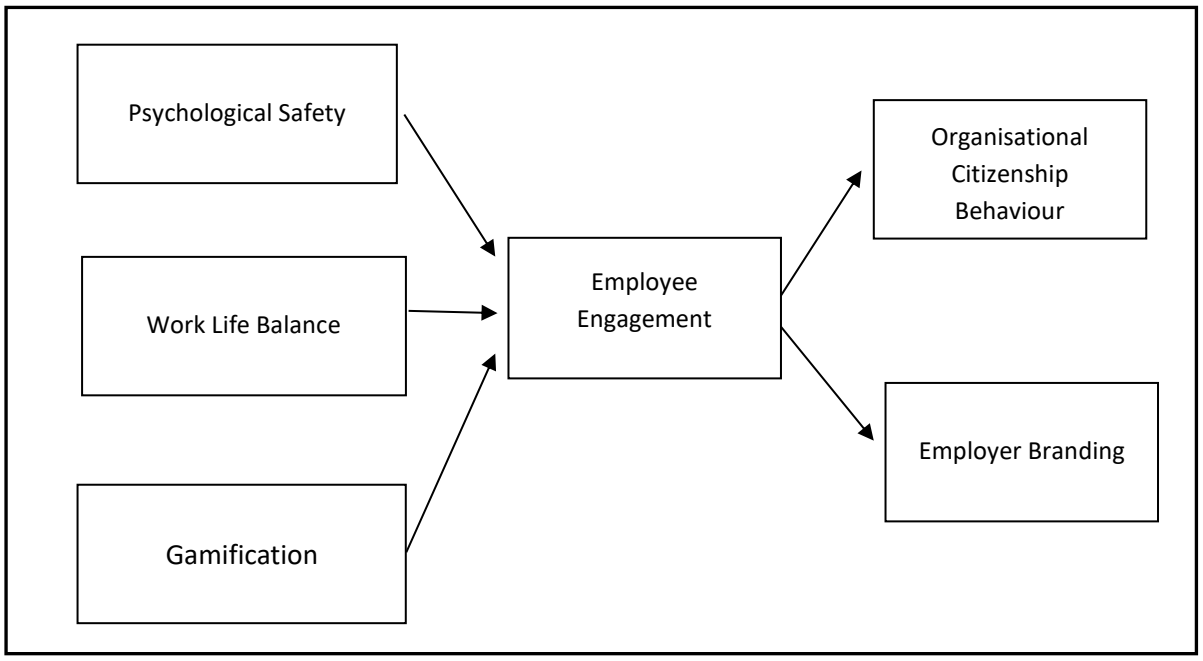

Image 2: Impact of Employee Engagement Tools/Techniques on Employer Branding and OCB (Model developed by author)

9. Research Methodology

This study aims at using a mixed method for data collection and analysis. It includes the both qualitative and quantitative methods. As the study would be conducted in information technology sector, the research population is IT company employees in select cities. Convenient sampling method would be followed for data collection. For primary data survey would be conducted through questionnaire for demographic and other details. 5-point Likert scale would be used. Sample size for the quantitative data would be 500. For qualitative analysis personal interviews would be conducted. The sample size for the qualitative data would be 50. For this research secondary data would be collected from different research papers and articles. The quantitative analysis of the data would be done using MS Excel and SPSS software. The validity and reliability checking would be done using Cronbach Alpha. Smart PLS software or AMOS would be used for doing structural equation modelling for finding out relationship among different constructs. Qualitative data analysis would be done using NVivo.

10. Limitations of the Study

There are lots of articles about employee engagement. Literature review in this study does not cover all the articles in this area because of time and resource limitations. Also, for any kind of research, being able to gather data with more units of the population increases the accuracy of the deductions made from analysis the data gathered. But as the size of the population is huge, it will not be possible to gather information from the entire population. There is time and cost constraint. Data will be collected from only a small percentage of the population using Convenient Sampling Technique.

11. Conclusion

Employee Engagement has gained importance over last few years as one of the major HR areas as it has been found through different researches and studies time and again that it has huge impact on employees' performance level. High degree of employee engagement leads to enhanced employee performance which helps organisations to perform at the optimum level and achieve their goals and objectives. The term has become more vital in view of the current changing dynamics of the work setup. Thus, it is very important to find the impact of various tools and techniques of employee engagement which influences employer branding and help organisations attract and retain best talents and help to ensure having positive Organisational Citizenship Behaviour among the employees. So here lies the need to conduct research extensively in this area based on primary data which helps the organisations to adopt the most effective employee engagement strategies for optimum performance of the employees as well as the organisations.

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